Anchor Text Guidance: Grade 3, Module 3

Exploring Literary Classics

Texts and authors

Peter Pan (Classic Starts) by J. M. Barrie
Lexile®: N/A

Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens by J. M. Barrie
Lexile®: N/A

Text Overview

EL Education's Grade 3, Module 3 is designed to prompt consideration of these compelling questions:

- How do writers capture a reader's imagination?
- What can we learn from reading literary classics?

A retelling of the J. M. Barrie original *Peter Pan (Classic Starts)* is the tale of a young boy who does not want to grow up. When *Peter Pan* brings the Darling children to Neverland, they have adventures they could only have imagined. This version has updated language and is abridged for young contemporary readers. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* is an early work by J. M. Barrie. It features *Peter Pan* as an infant who leaves home to live in Kensington Gardens. Selected excerpts describe young Peter's fantastic adventures.

Text Rationale

Grade 3, Module 3 teaches content through the lens of literary classics, specifically addressing how they are told in different ways and how studying them can show us how things have changed since the time they were written. In this module, students consider these questions through a case study of *Peter Pan* by J. M. Barrie. In the module, a literary classic is defined as a story that was written a long time ago but is still enjoyed today. It is important that students understand that one person's idea of a literary classic might be different from someone else's, because there are no set rules about what a literary classic is.

© 2021 EL Education Inc. Created with the support of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools.
Except where otherwise noted, EL Education's Language Arts Curriculum is published under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

At the beginning of the module, students read an informational text called "*Peter Pan*: The Author and Historical Context" (included in the module materials) to provide them with background information on who wrote *Peter Pan* and the time in which it was written (the early 1900s). As students read *Peter Pan*, they make connections between what they have read and the issues presented in the informational text, including how some people during the time period took advantage of other people or considered them inferior (e.g., society's view of women as intellectually weaker, and Native Americans being thought of as "savages"). Despite the racial and gender stereotypes in the novel, *Peter Pan* has continued to be read and enjoyed for over 100 years by children of all ages as an enduring story of a magical adventure.

Students engage in collaborative discussions in which they think critically about how and why authors use different literary elements and what those elements tell us about the author's perspective and the time period in which the text was written. Students also discuss how our understanding and norms of societal roles have shifted over time. These discussions allow students to think deeply about the beliefs and views of an author and how those are reflected in the stories authors write. As students learn, they practice using literary elements to rewrite scenes from *Peter Pan* with new perspectives.

In the module, students also analyze the traits and actions of the main characters in *Peter Pan* and compare their points of view to those of other characters. Teachers support students in navigating the text's complexity through close reads and other activities.

After finishing *Peter Pan*, students reflect on what they like and do not like about the literary classic and write a book review explaining whether they would recommend the story to a friend. Finally, students use their reflections to revise a scene from *Peter Pan* and create a presentation explaining how and why they revised that scene. This task is designed to empower students to act as upstanders and "right the wrongs," reimagining scenes from the book and writing an alternative story that may shift perspectives on gender roles, racial stereotypes, and character actions and personalities.

Finally, in this module, students work to become ethical people, treating others well and standing up for what is right (e.g., empathy, integrity, respect, compassion), and work to become effective learners, developing the mindsets and skills for success in college, career, and life (e.g., initiative, responsibility, perseverance, collaboration). They practice respect, perseverance, and integrity as they read and share their ideas about complex texts, work together collaboratively, and participate in discussions during which they share their opinions.

Additional Considerations

The majority of cultural references from the original *Peter Pan* that may have offended modern readers have been removed from the version that students read in the module, and historical background information is provided to help students better understand the time and place in which the book was written. It is important to be sensitive to students' and families' feelings and experiences with regard to literary classics such as *Peter Pan*—feelings that may range from very positive to somewhat neutral to very negative. Teachers are encouraged to discuss, early in the module, issues that may arise and give students time to reflect after reading each chapter. Throughout the module, EL Education provides teachers, students, and their families support and opportunities to discuss and react to stereotypes in the text safely, through engaging literacy tasks. For example, notes in the homework documents distributed to families recommend that they reach out to teachers with questions or concerns about the text and discuss them with their children. Lessons include suggestions for handling concerns sensitively.

EL Education recommends that school leaders and teachers read the texts in advance, with their specific school community in mind, to become familiar with the issues presented so that they can discuss them with students and families as needed.

Examples of sensitive topics that teachers should be prepared to address are detailed below.

1. Racial and Gender Stereotypes

When designing this module, EL Education was keenly aware of the racial and gender stereotypes in *Peter Pan*. Helping students understand these issues through a story many of them are already familiar with is central to the design and learning of the module. After digging deeper into a familiar story like *Peter Pan*, a student can walk away with a different lens or point of view and understand that literary classics often reveal how people viewed the world and the people in it differently in a previous time period.

For example, emphasize that the depiction of "Indians" in the story is a stereotype of Native Americans. Point out that although this kind of stereotyping was common in British society when J. M. Barrie wrote this story, it is definitely not appropriate or acceptable today. (The term *Indian* may also cause confusion if there are students whose families are native to India.) Repeat this process with the stereotyping of women and their place in society in *Peter Pan*.

Help students recognize that by looking at societal references in *Peter Pan* while considering "*Peter Pan*: The Author and Historical Context," we learn that many British people in the 1900s held seriously misguided beliefs about gender roles and different people and cultures around the world and treated people in ways that we would now describe as sexist and racist. Acknowledge that these connections may make some students feel uncomfortable and that the historical context can help us understand why these issues are present in texts such as *Peter Pan*, as well as still evident today in many ways.

Encourage discussions of what stereotypes are and why they are harmful. J. M. Barrie had never visited America, but he included detailed depictions of Native American characters in his stories, so it's important to wonder about that and ask students why these stereotypes came to his mind. How do we allow these images to persist and not question them? Using that same notice and wonder technique, invite students to engage in conversation around gender roles in *Peter Pan* and ask students how they feel about the depiction of gender in the story. Some possible prompts are:

- What is a stereotype? How might stereotypes affect people as they grow up?
- What is your opinion about the implicit messages authors sometimes send in their books?
- What are some of our ideas about how people of different sexes and/or genders "should" be or act?

Encourage students to bring in and explore other literary classics (stories that were written long ago and are still enjoyed today) that are meaningful to them and their families to share with the class. Additional supports for teachers may be found at the following websites:

- Learning for Justice: Challenging Stereotypes in *Peter Pan* (https://eled.org/2931)
- The Racist History of *Peter Pan*'s Indian Tribe (https://eled.org/2932)

2. War and Violence

Be aware that some students may be sensitive to the references to war and violence in chapter 6 of *Peter Pan*—particularly those students who have fled their country of origin due to war or violence. Remind students that this book is a fantasy and that it describes events that happen in an imaginary world. Support students as needed and consider checking in with them before and after they read the chapter. Consult with a guidance counselor or school social worker for further investigation of diversity and inclusion.

3. Magic

The presentation of the supernatural in *Peter Pan* may be discordant with some students' personal religious beliefs and practices. Fantasy fiction may convey embedded values that may conflict with (or reinforce) one's own values or orientation to the world. This module acknowledges the role that magic plays in the story of *Peter Pan*, but rather than emphasizing any religious implications, students are encouraged to approach these themes as quasi anthropologists, examining texts, posing questions, and seeking to understand the fantasy elements of the literature on their own journeys to becoming compelling writers.

Tasks

Throughout the module, there are tasks that intentionally or incidentally serve to mitigate possible concerns and support students' enthusiastic, informed, and safe reading.

Unit 1

Lesson 1: Explain to students that they are reading *Peter Pan* as an example of a literary classic and that we can learn things about different time periods in history by reading these types of texts. Also be sensitive to the fact that while some people love the adventure, characters, and descriptive writing in *Peter Pan*, some also find the racism and sexism offensive.

Lesson 2: Lesson 2 introduces the practice of making connections between the fictional story of *Peter Pan* and the historical context in which it was written. Preview the article "*Peter Pan*: The Author and Historical Context" before this lesson to be prepared to address questions from students about the sexism and/or racism in *Peter Pan*. This is an important routine throughout Unit 1 and can be used at any point in the module to support students' understanding of the historical context, including the perspective of the narrator, how the characters are connected, and who is or who isn't included and represented in the story.

The Closing and Assessment section of this lesson allows for time to discuss the use of the term *Indians* and also the term *lost boys*, which could be confused with the "lost boys" of Sudan. Students may be sensitive to this term as a result. Be prepared to refer students to the Working to Become Ethical People anchor chart should this discussion arise. Consider speaking to the families of students of Native American or Sudanese descent to discuss any additional support students may need or any additional discussion that may be required as a class to ensure all needs and concerns are addressed when reading this chapter. Give students a couple of minutes to silently reflect on and then share any relevant personal experiences if they choose.

Lesson 9: In this lesson, guide students through making connections to the historical context in pairs as they read "*Peter Pan*: The Author and Historical Context." In the chapter of *Peter Pan* that students read for this lesson, the Indians attack the underground cave, which can be interpreted as implying that Native Americans are dangerous and people to be afraid of.

The context text also explains that many people in the early 1900s believed that women should not work outside the home, so women are often depicted in literature doing jobs such as sewing socks while their husbands are out "doing important things" all day. *Peter Pan* describes how the boys kept Wendy busy cooking, cleaning, and sewing and that she didn't leave the cave for weeks.

Encourage productive and equitable conversation with Conversation Cues, which are questions teachers can ask students to help achieve four goals: (Goal 1) encourage all students to talk and be understood; (Goal 2) listen carefully to one another and seek to understand; (Goal 3) deepen thinking; and (Goal 4) think with others to expand the conversation. Identify effective ways to develop culturally responsive practices, celebrating diversity and practicing inclusion.

- Direct students' attention to the Working to Become Ethical People anchor chart and focus them on the traits of respect, compassion, and empathy.
- Review the meaning of the word *racist* (holding the belief that one race is superior to another).
- Invite students to use the vocabulary strategies on the Close Readers Do These Things anchor chart to determine the meaning of the word *sexist* (holding the belief that one sex, usually male, is superior to the other).
- Give students a couple of minutes to reflect silently before sharing any personal experiences with these issues if they choose.
- Acknowledge that these connections may make some people feel uncomfortable and that the historical context helps us understand why these issues are present in literary classics.

Lesson 11: At the end of the chapter students read in this lesson, students may notice that once again Wendy is playing the maternal figure to the lost boys by sending them to bed. Discuss this portrayal and, if productive, cue students to add on: "Who can add on to what your classmate said? I'll give you time to think and write." Acknowledge that these connections may make some feel uncomfortable and that the historical context helps us understand why these issues appear in literary classics.

Units 2 and 3

In these units, students do not continue to make connections between *Peter Pan* and its historical context, since most of the sensitive issues likely to surface come in previous chapters. If students continue to identify connections and issues, provide time for these discussions as outlined in Unit 1.

Including Families

Families of students working through this module are invited to discuss any concerns they have about the texts with their children and the teacher. Teaching notes throughout the module recommend that teachers speak to families of students who may be particularly affected by the topics encountered. Notes in the homework materials distributed to families recommend that they reach out to teachers with questions or concerns about the texts. These materials also encourage families to talk with their children about the texts they are reading, particularly if any of the topics raised might be sensitive to a particular student.